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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a 7-month study and conversation among field-based educators who attempted to respond to the challenges and responsibilities facing beginning principals. Documented is the role of the principal in affecting the success of school buildings. Apparent in this body of research is the need for the principal to be sensitive to educational, economic, and societal wants and needs. The principals' ability to recognize disabling practices and to invigorate school environments through proven leadership and management, are key issues. Three "model" letters addressed to a new principal present a basis for constructing a universal job description for the principalship; for developing the university curriculum for prospective principals; and for evaluating principals in practice. An addendum offers questions addressing leadership and effective schools as a means to structuring the thinking process. Reprinted is an article entitled "Select Seminar on Needs of Beginning Principals Completes Deliberations." (SI)

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New York LEADCENTER
Leadership in Educational Administration Development Center

EA 020 779

A View from the Inside: NEEDS OF BEGINNING PRINCIPALS

Report of the Select Seminar on the Needs of Beginning Principals

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LEAD Center

Leadership in Educational Administration Development Center
Capital Area School Development Association
School of Education, The University at Albany
State University of New York

A View From the Inside:
NEEDS OF BEGINNING PRINCIPALS

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A View from the Inside: NEEDS OF BEGINNING PRINCIPALS

September, 1988

Report of the Select Seminar on the Needs of Beginning Principals

Funding for this publication and the seminar was provided by the New York State Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) Center

A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE:
Report of the Select Seminar on Needs of Beginning Principals

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Foreword

This report on the principalship is a landmark because of what it says and because of who does the saying. It provides a sensitive, realistic and inspiring view of the principalship that reflects both intellectual acuity and practical wisdom. Rarely are the two compellingly brought together. The three "model" letters to a new principal are a case in point. One is written by the school board, another by the faculty and a third by a friendly experienced principal. America's schools would take a giant step forward in their quest for excellence if the letters were to become the basis for constructing a universal job description for the principalship; for developing the university curriculum for prospective principals; and for evaluating principals now in practice. Further, superintendents, state bureaucrats and school reformers need to take a long look at their policies, rules and regulations in light of the letters asking whether they are part of the problem or the solution.

Wisdom is always worth celebrating but I want to celebrate who is doing the saying, too. Quite frankly one of the reasons why educational administration, particularly the principalship, has not emerged to full professional standing is that practicing professionals have had so little say over professional matters. I believe that professional standing for principals is directly related to better schooling. If principals were in control of their profession far fewer schools would be overmanaged and underled. If principals were in control of their profession much more emphasis would be given to doing right things than doing things right. If principals were in control of their profession, educational leadership would triumph over management. If principals were in control of their profession, teacher professionalism would be greatly enhanced. Principals and teachers are bonded together in a common cause. The full potential of empowerment will be felt on teaching and learning when the school itself becomes the target of empowerment.

At present the state decides what the standards will be for admission to the principalship; the state and the university community do the certifying; the university community and the state decide the details of the curriculum; and the professors develop the knowledge base and write virtually all of the literature. It's time for a change. The principalship will emerge as a true profession if and only if principals become the main players (not tokens) in deciding who gets in, how one gets in, and what you need to know to get in. Important in all of this is greater participation by practicing professionals in writing the literature. That's what we have here: an important piece of literature written by professionals—an event worth celebrating.

Thomas J. Sergiovanni

Thomas J. Sergiovanni is Lillian Radford Professor of Education and Educational Administration at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. Prior to joining the faculty at Trinity, he spent 18 years as Professor of Educational Administration at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His long-term research interests have been in the areas of leadership and motivation to work. Most recently he has focused on the nature and characteristics of effective schools from a leadership perspective. He is author of several books including *Supervision Human Perspectives*, Third Edition (1983); *Handbook for Effective Department Leadership*, Second Edition (1984); *Leadership and Organizational Culture* (1984), *The New School Executive*, Second Edition (1980); and *The Principalship—A Reflective Practice Perspective* (1987). Professor Sergiovanni is consulting editor to the *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, the *Journal of Educational Equity and Leadership*, and *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, and has served on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Research and Development in Education* and *Educational Administration Quarterly*.

Preface

The New York State Leadership in Educational Administration Program in its attempt to provide a grassroots forum for the discussion of leadership and management of elementary and secondary schools, presents the second in a series of white papers, *A View from the Inside: Needs of Beginning Principals.*

This report represents a seven-month study and conversation by field based educators who attempted to respond to the challenges and responsibilities facing beginning principals. This seminar report represents the best thinking of competent teachers and administrators who are affected, on a daily basis, by the success or failure of beginning principals. During the course of the seminar it became increasingly apparent that the results of these proceedings have implications for the full spectrum of individuals, groups, and organizations concerned with the process of education. This publication, originally designed to benefit beginning principals, has meaning for all of us.

Well documented in the volumes of recent research is the role of the principal in affecting the success of school buildings. Also apparent in this body of research is the need for the principal to be sensitive to educational, economic, and societal wants and needs. The principals' ability to recognize disabling practices, and to invigorate school environments through proven leadership and management, were key issues addressed during the seminar. The major theme of the conversation throughout the proceedings revolved around the pursuit of excellence and goals in a collaborative, cooperative way, that allows educators to tap (perhaps for the first time) the enormous wealth of talent and expertise present in our schools. Among the major themes of the seminar were the absolute belief in the necessity of conducting our work in an atmosphere of cooperation and trust, couched in team effort that encourages interaction and shared learning.

Implicit in the discussion was the need for a fundamental rethinking of management based on hierarchy in a culture of professionals. Those who are to become successful school leaders are individuals who can help turn challenges into opportunities, who can help clarify problems, choices and options, who can build morale and create a vision, who can form coalitions and raise expectations, who can empower others and enhance the possibilities of true professionalism in schools.

The power of this seminar is vested in the fact that its content reflects the thoughtful deliberations on current theory and practice addressed by individuals who work in the reality of a school culture on a daily basis.

The involvement, cooperation and dedication of the group of seminar participants is deeply appreciated.

Richard Bamberger
Executive Director, CASDA

Nelson Armlin
Associate Director, CASDA

Richard McDonald
Director, LEAD CENTER

The Process

The CASDA select seminars follow a very simple structure based upon a set of guiding principles:

1. ***Participants need to commit adequate time—to work, to reflect, and to write.***
   This seminar was designed to be a continuing dialogue. Participants met three times in Albany to set the guidelines and to begin the dialogue. The bulk of the work took place while sequestered for three consecutive days at the Rensselaerville Institute. The process, from beginning to end, lasted approximately seven months.

   This time has allowed the participants to commit the appropriate amount of time to their task—to discuss, to debate, and to reach consensus.

2. ***A conducive working environment is very important.***
   The seminars have been conducted in "protected environments"—away from the work site, in quiet and aesthetically pleasing surroundings. We believe this clearly is a first step in communicating to participants that the seminar is special and there are high expectations that the deliberations of its members will have an important result.

3. ***The seminar participants are the experts.***
   We believe the select seminars have been successful because of the high degree of personal and professional respect afforded participants. While participants do extensive reading for the seminars, visiting experts and lecturers are not a part of this experience. The individuals who participated in this seminar represented years of educational experience and educational training. They constituted the body of experts.

4. ***Roles are "checked at the door."***
   One's idea must stand on its own, be debated, accepted, or discarded without reference to one's position, prior experience, or education. This seminar included school superintendents, principals, supervisors, teachers, and members of CASDA-LEAD Center.

5. ***Seminars are self-governing entities with organizers serving the group.***
   The coordination of the seminar was managed by CASDA-LEAD Center staff. After providing the initial structure and on-going logistical support, they worked to transfer the governance and direction from themselves to the participants. By the end of the seminar it is fair to say that it was self-governed with the coordinators taking direction from the seminar group.

6. ***The experience is as important as the product.***
   All seminar participants agree that the process, the experience, is most important. The report provides an important documentation of the experience and serves to validate for each of the participants the energy and effort they expended.

Select Seminar on the Needs of Beginning Principals in New York State in the 1990s

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Introduction

Many of the participants secretly began to wonder why they had agreed to participate in what could turn out to be another one of a succession of conferences with too ambitious an agenda and no real consensus among the members because of dissimilar perceptions, backgrounds, and needs.

wonder why

It began, not in the reflective tranquility of a conference center retreat, but rather at the end of a hectic school day in October. A mixed group of twenty-three principals, teachers, and superintendents met in Albany. Brought together at the behest of the Leadership in Educational Administration Development Center at the Capital Area School Development Association for the purpose of attempting to provide insights and recommendations on the role of new principals in the 1990s, the group certainly had its work cut out for it. As the individuals mingled and waited for late arrivals, it was clearly evident that very few, if any, of the participants had much of an idea about what would develop over the next few hours. Finally the CASDA staff assembled the group in a large meeting area which had more the air of a negotiation room than a seminar meeting room. The focus of the room was a large number of linen covered tables forming an approximately thirty foot square. The members of the seminar took their places on the perimeter of the table and listened politely as the CASDA staff briefly outlined the purpose of the seminar and the proposed format and activities for the evening session and successive sessions in December and February. It was difficult in October to project what they might be attempting to accomplish four months hence. Many of the participants secretly began to wonder why they had agreed to participate in what could turn out to be another one of a succession of conferences with too ambitious an agenda and no real consensus among the members because of dissimilar perceptions, backgrounds and needs.

Into such an arena the twenty-three participants plunged. Initially each person was given an opportunity to present a brief opening statement regarding his/her views about the principalship, the greatest needs of principals, principals as leaders, etc. What came forth predictably covered a myriad of gripes, laments and the overwhelming challenges facing principals today. A few of the teachers present added that they saw the position of principal, as we commonly refer to it, as being outdated and ineffectual in light of current trends toward participatory management in schools. Questions were raised as to the validity of having a principal at all! The traditional dual role of instructional leader and administrative manager of the school began to emerge as the two most overriding concerns of the group. There was little agreement about which role would dominate in defining what direction the group should take. At this point it seemed like an appropriate and needed time for a break.

After dinner, the participants broke into role alike groups, i.e., teachers, administrators, and attempted to write a job description for a principal of the 1990s. Incorporated in that task were such elements as:

—What skills will a principal need?

—How might a person be trained to achieve those skills?

—What support (administrative, collegial, academic) might a principal need?

Overriding all these questions was the reoccurring question:

—What should be the main responsibilities of a principal?

From the results of the discussions and the preliminary reports that were shared with the group, it was evident that the seminar group had a long way to go in achieving a working harmony and consensus.

Maybe it was a good thing that six weeks would elapse before the group would meet again. With the raw winds and ice of December upon them, the participants met once again to continue the discussion. This time mixed groups representing both teachers and administrators were formed and they worked together in an attempt to focus the discussion on realistic roles, responsibilities and needs of school building principals in the 1990s.

A subtle but significant change had begun to take place during the discussions and reporting sessions to the entire group. Although there was still a great deal of disagreement over the roles teachers and principals should exercise in schools, there was a common belief emerging that top down, traditional management styles currently in place in many schools would not meet the emerging needs of the principalship, and in fact, could doom it to failure.

As the participants left that December evening, they still wondered about the effectiveness of the discussions and their labors to date. Willing to continue, but not quite sure of the direction they were headed, the group made their way home not to reconvene again until the end of February.

Once again, the participants met in Albany after working hours and as agreed previously, brought in some home-based data on teachers' perceptions of principals' roles and responsibilities. Out of these retellings, disjointed and fragmented as they might be, the groups began to summarize the major areas of agreement and disagreement that had been expressed. From these major points, a vision of the final task finally began to emerge. The participants were no longer talking at each other, but rather they were now engaged in a constructive dialogue. The three evening sessions had served their purpose over the intervening months. They gave the group an opportunity to vent their individual and collective frustrations with the role of the principal as it is currently instituted, and as importantly, gave people in differing and often conflicting roles (superintendents, experienced principals, new principals, teachers and support staff), an opportunity to express their feelings in a non-threatening collegial setting. Trust was emerging.

As the group dispersed that chilly February evening, there was a collective hope that when they came together in April much of what had been discussed and argued over the previous four months would, with the coming of spring, begin to bear fruit.

It was a reunion of sorts for these weary veterans of the fall and winter sessions in Albany as they greeted each other on a sunny and warm Sunday afternoon in April at the Rensselaerville Institute. Spirits were high as the members of the seminar and the CASDA staff caught up on each others' activities over dinner. Everyone present seemed truly pleased to be there, as contrasted to the hectic pace of the three previous sessions which had been convened at the end of busy work

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A consensus was developing, some seven months in the **consensus** *making, and one in which many of the participants would not have predicted possible a few short months earlier.*

days after fighting heavy rush hour traffic. All present were looking forward to two and one-half days of uninterrupted reflection and sharing.

The Sunday evening session at Rensselaerville started off with a contrived debate over the role of the principal as instructional leader or educational manager. While both mixed teams in the debate attempted to present opposing points of view, it was apparent that the previous months' work had had its effect. A consensus was developing, some seven months in the making, and one in which many of the participants would not have predicted possible a few short months earlier. A lively discussion among the groups grew out of the "debate" and continued on into the late evening hours as the participants socialized in the lounge.

Monday's clear sky and clean mountain air beckoned the group members to their assigned tasks. Small mixed groups wrestled with discussion guides meant to draw out opinions which could be the basis for some clear and concise observations on the principalship, recommendations to superintendents and boards of education, and advice to new principals from teachers, community members and veteran principals. These groups remained together until the conclusion of the seminar. The groups worked diligently, breaking only for lunch and a scheduled afternoon free activity period which proved to be just the tonic the weary and mentally fatigued participants needed to recharge. A walk on the grounds or a hike to a near-by lake changed the routine just enough so that after dinner everyone was once again eager to continue the task at hand. Monday evening a clear consensus began to emerge from the group. Tuesday's work session would be in preparation for a group of university professors, superintendents and board of education members invited to share with the seminar participants their perceptions, ideas, hopes and concerns for the future of our schools and one of the key elements in making them productive learning environments—effective leadership.

What follows in this report are the results and recommendations of a diverse group of educators who, for a seven-month period, grappled with the thorny questions which will continue to be with us into the next century. This seminar and report will add to that discussion.

What follows in this report are the results and recommendations of a diverse group of educators who, for a seven month period, grappled with the thorny questions which will continue to be with us into the next century.

Letter to the New Principal from the School Board

Dear New Principal:

Welcome to the principalship! Although this position is fraught with conflicts and controversies, it places those who hold the job in the center of the lives of many people, and their actions will have a profound effect on them.

When first entering the building, be aware that principals are the cause of stress because they represent change, some will welcome it, and others will be suspicious and wary. The school staff and indeed the entire school community, must work together channelling this stress into a force for constructive change. Preserve what is worthy from the past and go forward with ideas for innovation and change. It takes time to develop trust, but sincerity and shared ownership among the staff and community will make for a healthy, productive and happy environment, which is essential for all who will work and learn there.

While addressing the daily routine and crises, leading your people and managing the school, keep in the forefront of your mind who the real clients are—the children. Stay close to the students—by teaching, coaching or sponsoring an activity. Never lose sight of the fact that you are foremost a teacher, and a fine one. Show the students and faculty how to communicate with others and how to be enthusiastic learners.

Be able to laugh at yourself. Make laughter a part of the school!

Recognize that decision-making is best carried out closest to the source of the activity, and that decisions which are based on collaboration with those affected have the greatest sense of ownership and enthusiasm. It therefore seems sensible that the school staff work in a collaborative manner, sharing decisions whenever possible to maximize the impact these decisions will have on the total school program.

As you embark on this enterprise go slowly, look, listen and smile. Know that mistakes will be made and it is all right. Maintain a professional manner, keep confidences, and when confrontations are necessary, conduct them as humanely as possible. Recognize the need to be encouraged and supported by those working with and above you in the school district, let them know that you need their support and assistance. As you facilitate, not force; collaborate, not command; you will grow personally and professionally. You are now embarking on a journey in which you have tremendous potential for personal growth. Remember you have been selected for a position of leadership, so lead, but always be aware of the difference between leadership and authority.

All of us associated with this school want success. For if this school is successful then the entire community benefits. The staff, parents and the school district administrators encourage you to call upon them for help, assistance and guidance as the need arises in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Your School Board

Reflections on the Role of the Principal

Decisions about the work day are often **decisions** *dictated by principals themselves. The choice is often one of being absorbed in daily administrative trivia or being engaged in instructional leadership tasks.*

In brief, they find a way to create a **create** *climate of excellence in terms of teaching and learning in spite of conflicting and inescapable administrative responsibilities.*

If one were to guess whether people were in agreement that there would need to be a change in the role of the principal in the near future, a majority would have agreed. As one participant said, "Any time we can get a dialogue going for people who are working and hopefully working toward the same goals, the better off we are. When we heard our group summaries, we heard some things that were similar between an administrator's perspective and a teacher's, but a lot of things were different. It will be interesting to try to put everything together."

With that challenge, it was two months later at Rensselaerville, that we met to see what we could accomplish together.

There were three groups in Rensselaerville, made up of teachers, principals and superintendents. When we had the opportunity to share the results of our small groups' efforts with our colleagues, there was indeed a number of common elements that were noted by each recorder.

It was acknowledged by all groups that principals are faced with a number of administrative responsibilities that could be classified as management functions. However, the seminar participants felt that effective principals somehow prioritize their work efforts to reflect an emphasis on educational leadership functions rather than maintenance activities. It was agreed that one of the greatest needs in schools is for principals to reexamine priorities and reconsider how to allocate their time and energy. Decisions about the work day are often dictated by principals themselves. The choice is often one of being absorbed in daily administrative trivia or being engaged in instructional leadership tasks. The latter, a much more sophisticated and higher level of performance, leads to a higher degree of job satisfaction, yet the former tends to demand an inordinate amount of the principals' time.

The seminar participants felt that in effective schools, the necessary routine administrative functions are not neglected but addressed within the organizational structure while principals facilitate the teaching and learning process. It was felt that effective principals, experiencing the same continuous flow of responsibilities in terms of management that others have, are adept at facilitating instructional leadership in their buildings. In brief, they find a way to create a climate of excellence in terms of teaching and learning in spite of conflicting and inescapable administrative responsibilites. *Leadership appears to be the key ingredient.*

The Principal as instructional Leader and Manager...

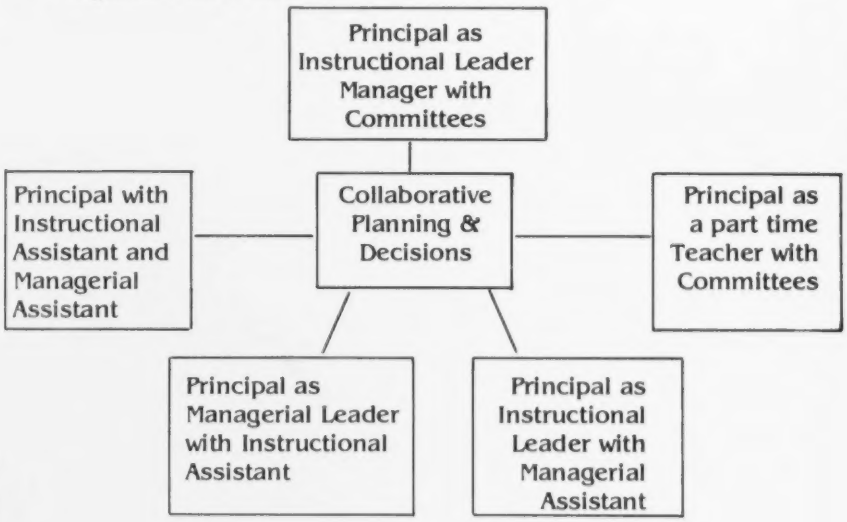
- exists in most districts
- is responsible for all aspects of school functioning.
- is being pulled in two directions at once.
- is forced to make on the spot decisions which may result in one area getting attention at the cost of letting another area slide.

Responsibilities include:

- *Instructional*
  1. supervision processes
  2. staff development
  3. communications
  4. hiring and supervising staff
  5. testing and evaluation
  6. curriculum development
  7. development of instructional schedule
  8. faculty meetings
  9. staff recognition
  10. conflict resolution

- *Managerial*
  1. building maintenance
  2. transportation
  3. food services
  4. budget
  5. legal
  6. building use schedule
  7. supervise non-instructional staff
  8. conflict resolution
  9. staff recognition
  10. building/district office relations (meetings, committees, activities, events)
  11. others (CSE, Child Study Team, grants, PSEN, Title 1, etc.)

- *Organizational Patterns*


Principal as Instructional Leader Manager with Committees
Principal with Instructional Assistant and Managerial Assistant
Collaborative Planning & Decisions
Principal as a part time Teacher with Committees
Principal as Managerial Leader with Instructional Assistant
Principal as Instructional Leader with Managerial Assistant

Regardless of the organizational pattern used, a collaborative approach is essential.

pattern

The configuration (administrative) or an organizational pattern is dependent on:

1. size of building
2. district directives
3. resources
4. funding
5. individual skills

Regardless of the organizational pattern used, a collaborative approach is essential.

Ownership + Involvement = Commitment

Within each organizational pattern, the responsibilities of the group must be defined. Some aspects may be addressed by a group while others may be handled by individuals. Roles should be identified by those involved.

Shared Responsibilities relate to long term and ongoing processes. These may include the development of philosophy, goals, procedures, and implementation as well as tasks such as budget development, building use, curriculum development, instructional schedules, and discipline policies. The coordination of tasks involved in a process developed by a group may be done by individuals (principal, teacher, secretary, custodian, etc.). Some *Individual Responsibilities* might include filing a PINS petition, discipline that is immediate, conflict resolution, staff observations and evaluations. The members of each one of the small groups brought to the seminar individual ideas, needs and personal agendas. The discussions were often lively. Our task was, in fact, to come to some kind of consensus that would represent the differing philosophies and views of the participants. At the end of the second evening, everyone in the group felt they were comfortable with the report. That was no easy task considering the variety of backgrounds and personalities. It was great to come to closure with each member saying "go with it." One seminar participant captured the essence of the project by saying; "Principals are human beings. I learned that a group of people who apparently have few ideas in common when they first meet, can talk and listen and come up with better ideas than they started with."

Principals are human beings. I learned that a group **human** *of people who apparently have few ideas in common when they first meet, can talk and listen and come up with better ideas than they started with.*

Letter to the New Principal from a Veteran Principal

Dear New Principal,

Welcome to the ranks! It seems like not so very long ago I was in your shoes. It is difficult for me, even after all these years, to put a handle on exactly what it means to be the principal and to tell you what it takes to be successful in that role.

Before you despair, however, let me share some ideas, thoughts and suggestions that I've picked up along the way. These thoughts may help to ease the transition, but always remember that you will be expected to make your own way and that you must develop your own style.

As I look back upon the beginning of my career as a principal, I must chuckle at the fact that it all seemed so simple then—that is until the school bell rang! I quickly learned that excellence is not something that can be ordered or mandated. Do not be fooled by the notion that your enthusiasm and talent alone can cause success without the help of others. Be aware that one of the most thoroughly documented conclusions of recent research and experience is that the principal is, in a number of ways, the key person in the educational enterprise. However, equally well documented is the fact that many principals are awed by the challenges and responsibilities that they face. You are surrounded by others who are willing to share those challenges and responsibilities with you. Your job is to help create a climate for excellence, to invigorate and motivate the workplace. It is to prize and nurture collaborative endeavors. It is to enable and free individuals to be all that they can be. Creating and maintaining a healthy, vital and stimulating workplace will be your greatest challenge.

Be confident and positive, get to know every staff member from the most senior to the part time personnel. Treat them with respect and dignity and you will receive the same in return. Be sure that you share expectations with those who will be working with you. If you have questions, ask; if you need more information, seek it out—there will be many decisions that you make based on good information and with the best of intentions which will backfire, but in an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and confidence you will be rated on balance, not on an isolated decision.

One of the first lessons learned is that your time is not your own. People in the school community will expect you to attend to their needs, and not necessarily when it is convenient. Set your agenda but be flexible to changing circumstances and new information. Give credit to others for a job well done.

There will be times when you feel you are being treated unfairly and often by the very people you are attempting to help the most. Keep your sense of humor when things seem at their worst; it will carry you a long

way. Be tactful, trustworthy, diplomatic, and loyal. Maintain confidence in yourself and your abilities, remember there are a number of people who have enough confidence in you or you would not have the job. Avoid the pitfalls of "personal power"; learn to empower your building. Be aware of your intellectual and cognitive growth—read—model learning as a lifelong process. Respect and enjoy the students and staff and whenever and wherever possible build bonding relationships; and strive to create a culture of learners in your school. Never forget that collective wisdom and human resources are the things that allow us to make a difference. Delegate "up" when appropriate—it is a strength not a weakness. Build a solid belief system with the staff about what it is you want to accomplish. As important as a belief system is, remember that it is impossible to develop or implement without involvement and consensus. Go slowly, trust; beliefs do not develop overnight; they take time to nurture and evolve. One of your primary roles is to facilitate that development.

Be willing to take risks, and do not be afraid to admit that you need help along the way. Remember that none of us can succeed in this world without the help of others. One of your major tasks is to mobilize the talents and energies of everyone in the school community. A large measure of your success will be based on how much ownership that community feels for the schools. Excellence is a journey, not a destination. Supply the compass for that journey.

Hopefully some of the ideas in this letter will enable you to get off on the right foot and still be standing on both feet at the end of your first year.

Be aware that you are entering one of the most challenging and rewarding positions on earth. Good luck and best wishes!

Sincerely,

Your Fellow Principal

The position of principal as presently structured

structured

is nearly an impossible one.

The role of the principal, then, in a school building, depends on the person filling that role.

person

The work of a principal is presenty caught between

no man's land

the past and the future—a no man's land. No longer can the principal be thought of as the educational leader; yet he/she desires it to be so. The principal must organize and allow the professionals to conduct the activities of the classroom, professional development and program planning.

Observations About the Work of the Principal

The position of principal as presently structured is nearly an impossible one. There are so many demands and expectations placed upon the principal that the principal rarely achieves all of these expectations. Expectations vary in communities depending on the size of the district, the size of the building, the number of assistants, the traditional expectations of the community, and the demands of the superintendent and central office.

The traditional definition of the principal requires that he/she be not only the manager of the building but also the instructional leader. As one of the participants in the seminar said, "The work of a principal in the present school organization is overwhelming. Principals who want to be instructional leaders will often find their time filled with administrative tasks."

Critics of the principalship often accuse principals of hiding behind the administrative tasks of their positions. Too often principals do not feel secure in the process of evaluation and observation of teachers, in their ability to bring together people for decision making, in their vision of the educational process, and in their ability to articulate this vision to the staff of the building, the central office, and the community. Another seminar participant said, "The principalship seems to be made up of so many responsibilities and expectations (that) one cannot do a respectable job at all and runs the risk of completely screwing-up some in order to do well in others."

Because the definition of the role of the principal is so immense, very few people can fill that role in all of its dimensions. The role of the principal, then, in a school building, depends on the person filling that role. One of the seminar participants reacted to this point in the following way: "There are as many definitions of the role as there are principals, teachers, students, parents, etc. That is, the expectations are numerous and diverse; e.g., someone is always disappointed. Principals must therefore be strong individuals with a clear definition of priorities and a thick skin."

Still another seminar member reacted to this point by saying, "Buildings operate based upon the leadership or role assumed by the person who is the principal. Principals are largely divested individuals whose daily responsibilities run the gamut of discipline, attendance, faculty/student concerns and expectations to who's going to paint out the graffiti, patrol the parking lot, and substitute for the sick paraprofessional. Wouldn't it be nice to have more time to visit the classroom to see how teachers and students work together. Problem solving always impacts such a wide variety of people in almost every decision—we're not going to please everyone all of the time."

The expectation that the principal be both the instructional leader and the manager played a pivotal part in the discussions of the select seminar. Many of the participants would agree with this statement of one of the seminar members: "The work of a principal is presently caught between the past and the future—a no man's land. No longer can the principal be thought of as the educational leader; yet he/she desires it to be so. The principal must organize and allow the professionals to conduct the activities of the classroom, professional development and program planning."

In spite of the concern over the role and expectations of the principalship and in face of the difficulties which anyone in that role encounters, the principals in the seminar would probably agree with this comment: "Though many days are trying, I can't think of anything I would rather do with my life. Educating children is the most rewarding profession for me. Shaping future generations is, in my opinion, an exciting job. We should take this into consideration when we train principals in the future. It is a positive profession."

Although the seminar members agreed that the role of the principal is nearly an impossible one, they avoided a restructuring of that role. Rather, they made recommendations for improving the preparation of principals and suggested ways that experienced principals could improve their skills. Other recommendations addressed the ways that other professionals in schools could help principals be more successful.

Needs of the Principal

The members of the seminar considered the needs of principals—especially beginning principals—and tried to arrive at some conclusions.

Principals need to understand what is expected of them by the superintendent, the board, the community and the teachers. The principal must have at his/her command the ability to learn these expectations through conversations with leaders in these groups. Perhaps most essential is the relationship between the principal and superintendent.

The style of the superintendent often determines the role of the principal. The current literature in educational administration stresses the importance of collective decision making. A principal needs to bring professionals and support staff together in such a way that they are able to participate in the decision making involving the education of children. Principals need to have or need to develop this skill. Conflict situations arise when the superintendent and principals are not in agreement concerning this leadership style. An administrator, before assuming a principal's position in a school district, should examine the expectations of the superintendent and the larger school community concerning this collective decision making approach to leadership.

The principal also needs to know how to mold a school around a vision which is often delineated in both short and long term goals. The principal needs to be a good communicator of this vision or goals and needs to know how to use the resources of the central administration, faculty, parents, and students to support and further this vision. This ability, though written about extensively in the literature, is not a skill that is taught in the graduate programs of educational administration.

The members of the seminar also stressed the importance of time and how to manage it. They stressed the necessity to jealously guard the time necessary to share ideas with others, to talk frequently with staff members about children, their education, and the collective vision of what the school should be. They stressed that a principal should guard against being totally consumed by the "administrivia" of the job, even though they admitted that the principal must have the management

Principals, especially new principals, need to **understand** *understand what is expected of them...*

The style of the superindendent often determines the role of the principal. **style**

The principal also needs to know how to mold a school around a vision which is often delineated in both short and long term goals.

vision

The members of the seminar also stressed the importance of time and how to manage it.

time

In addition to understanding organizational theory, school finance, school law,

communication

and styles of leadership, principals need to understand and practice communication skills.

details under control before even attempting to be the instructional leader.

Improving Effectiveness

A third topic that each group discussed was improving the overall effectiveness of principals.

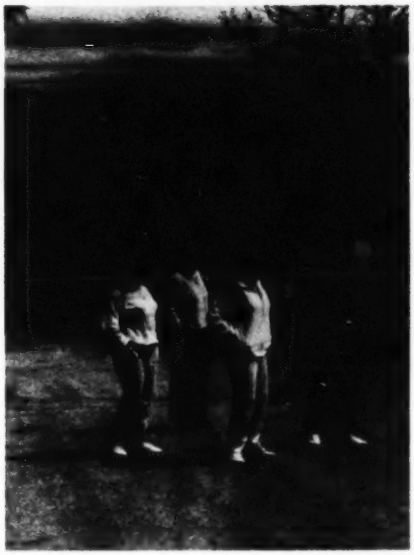
The people in the seminar stressed the importance of working collaboratively with boards of education, other administrators and teachers, to design equitable selection processes; to develop job descriptions which stress collaborative decision-making; to provide administrative assistance to handle some of the managerial tasks; and to foster communities of learners which stress ongoing professional opportunities utilizing the research on effective schools, learning/teaching styles, and techniques of collaboration.

Educators should also work cooperatively with schools of education which are currently preparing educational administrators. These programs should have an appropriate blend of theory and practical management skills. In addition to understanding organizational theory, school finance, school law, and styles of leadership, principals need to understand and practice communication skills. "Principals need to learn to be excellent listeners by receiving formal training in this skill (communications). They need to convince the students, the parents, and/or the staff members that they really are hearing and understanding the expressed concern. Secondly, principals need to be synthesizers and articulators. They need to effectively organize tasks and then seek out the most competent persons to carry them out regardless of rank or title." Principals also need to understand group process and have experience in it. They need to know how to bring together diverse groups of people to discuss issues, goals, and reach consensus on those issues and goals.

The members of the seminar emphasized the necessity of providing practical experience along with theoretical knowledge in preparation programs; they did not, however, provide a blueprint of such programs for schools of education but recommended a collaborative effort on the part of practicing educators and teaching faculty from the schools of educational administration.

For those principals who are currently leading schools, the seminar group stressed the importance of their affiliation, their collaboration, and their participation in a principals' center such as the Greater Capital Region Principals' Center which includes in its mission statement many of the ideas which emerged from the seminar to improve the effectiveness of principals.

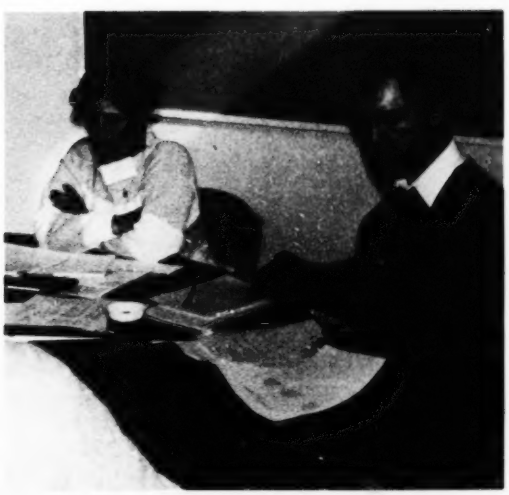
One of the seminar participants summed up the reason for the recommendations emerging from the select seminar by saying, "Having started as a vice-principal and then moving to the principalship, I find it hard during a selection process to find newly certified people credible. They have excellent ideas and no practical experience. We must get the new administrators quality hands-on experience before they go on the job."

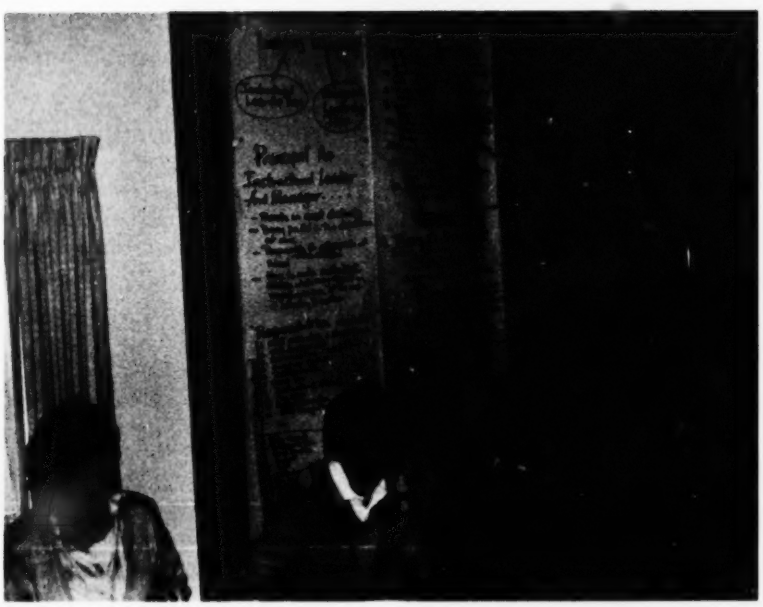


The members of the seminar emphasized strongly the

preparation

necessity of providing practical experience along with theoretical knowledge in preparation programs.





Letter to the New Principal from a Teacher

Dear New Principal,

I think I speak for all of the other teachers in this building when I say we wish you well as our principal. Your success in the leadership position you have accepted will profoundly affect our own success as teachers. Your failure will, in like manner, leave its mark.

What do we expect from you? We hope you would believe as we do that good teaching must be the activity given the highest priority in our school. Students learn in many ways and in many settings. However, students are sent to schools to learn primarily by being taught. We wish you to be our colleague in this exciting and complex enterprise. Do not try to control or direct us. Together we have more knowledge and experience than you. Rather, be the occasion for us to become more in touch, more engaged with each other as sources of knowledge, skill, and experience. It is often said because of the nature of the self-contained classroom that teaching is an isolated and isolating activity. Help us lessen that sense of isolation.

How we feel about our teaching—our confidence in our abilities—affects how well we teach and how joyfully we approach each day of teaching. Our students deserve to be taught by confident joyful teachers at peace with themselves and their chosen profession. Help make available the resources to enable us to improve and develop our teaching skills. Recognize, as very experienced teachers do, how vulnerable to criticism and second guessing the act of teaching is. The relationship between teaching and learning is complex, well understood in general, poorly understood in its specifics. Therefore have an open mind but a healthy skepticism of those self-appointed experts who offer easy and absolute answers. Allow us to help you in deciding between what will be helpful in improving our school and what will just take our time and energy.

In accepting your new position we hope you have a vision of how our school in all respects can achieve high standards of excellence. We too, have such visions. Together, as they say, we can make it happen.

I have not mentioned parents, the Board of Education, the Superintendent or the community at large. They are all important. The nature of our relationship with them will and should be dictated by how well we teach our students. If the school experience for every one of our students is characterized by the achievement of intellectual, social and practical skills—if students are learning and recognize they are learning—then our relationships with those outside of our building will be easy to manage. The point of this is that we must be clear about our priorities. To fail in this is to be subject to the whims and fancies of those not only less knowledgeable but also often less committed to the specific learning needs of each student in our building.

Finally, we share our very best wishes with you in your new position. We look forward to working with you—helping our children learn and grow and prepare themselves to become mature, well-educated adults.

Sincerely,

Your Teachers

Recommendations to Superintendents, Central Administration, and Boards of Education

Districts must maintain a high level of **help** *commitment, confidence, and support to help the new administrator succeed.*

Participatory management practices should **encompass** *the entire school community, the board of education, the superintendent, the principal, students and the staff.*

We recommend that board members make sure that **teaching** *the superintendent is a teaching administrator.*

It was the consensus of the group that a statement be made directly to the superintendents, central administration, and boards of education who will employ the beginning principals. School districts invest in a beginning principal by offering a most rewarding and challenging position. Districts must maintain a high level of commitment, confidence and support to help the new administrator succeed.

The illustration on the next page shows the seminar's "Super Principal."

Notice that "Super Principal" can only fly if supported by the staff, superintendent, board of education and the community. It is a collective responsibility to help "Super Principal" fly; and it is essential that everyone, including the new principal, understand this.

Realize that the new principals' career development is in part your responsibility. Support them professionally, provide development opportunities for them and their staff. Staff development opportunities for all members of the educational team (this includes board of education members and the superintendent) are imperative. A district supported professional development and enrichment program would enhance personal and professional growth, increase motivation, interest, and commitment for all involved.

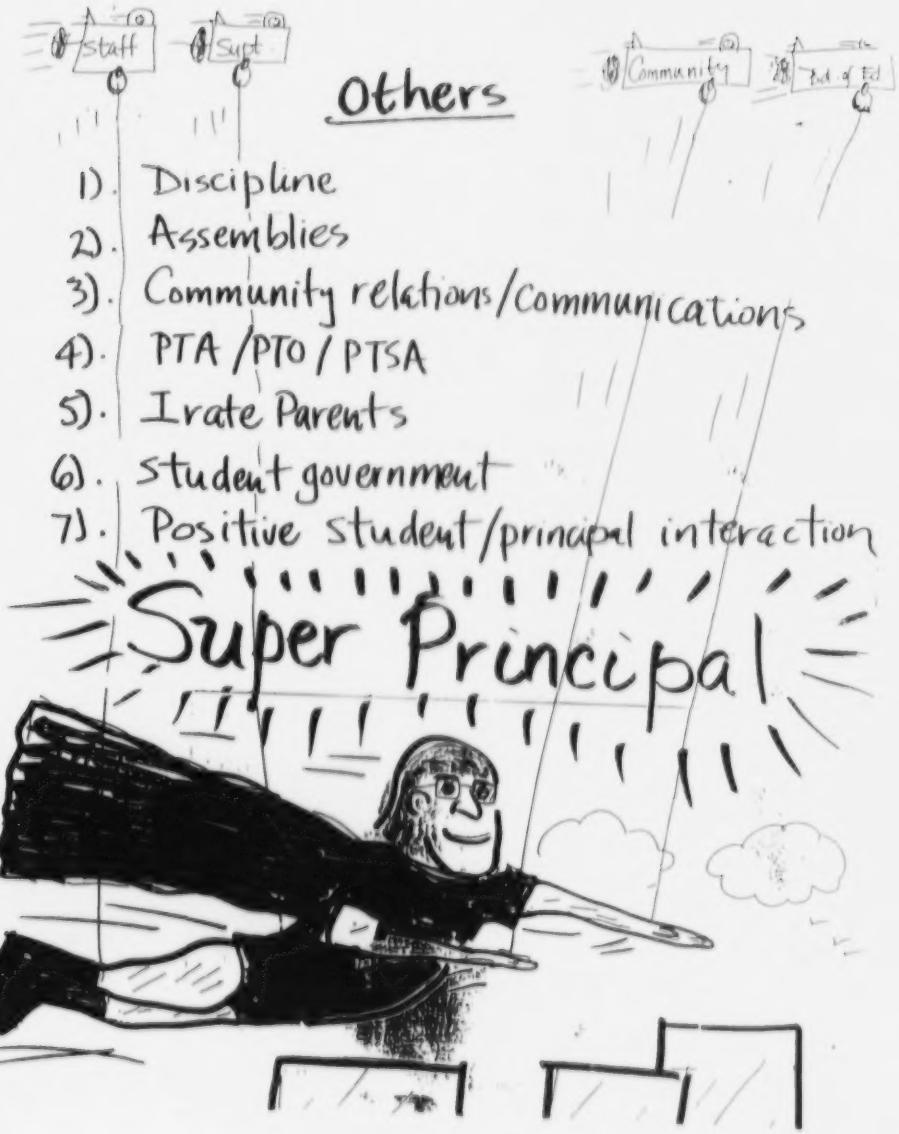
Give the new principals opportunities to explore with their staff participatory management and shared decision making and planning models. Participatory management practices should encompass the entire school community, the board of education, the superintendent, the principal, students and the staff.

We recommend that board members make sure that the superintendent is a teaching administrator. The superintendent must inform the beginning principal of the district goals, objectives, policies and procedures, the professional and non-teaching contracts, and the board of education's expectations.

The superintendent, master teacher, or administrative colleague can act as mentors for the new principal. Expectations for the beginning principal should be limited and prioritized, then clearly articulated.

Above all else, when the building staff is reaching for excellence, provide the necessary resources to foster success. Provide support and demonstrate confidence, and care about the principal as a person. Recognize the principal when he/she does well.

The board of education, superintendent, central administration, teachers, staff, students, and community make "Super Principal" fly.



The superintendent, master teacher, or **mentors** *administrative colleagues can act as mentors for the new principal.*

Afterword

The ultimate result of success for the new **communities of learners** *principal is the creation of a synergistic school culture that strikes at the very heart of what schools were always meant to be, communities of learners.*

Our conversation and written seminar report has allowed us to share our expertise, ideas, feelings and concerns with other practitioners and concerned citizens. This dialogue is essential in addressing the complex concerns of the new principal.

What we have accomplished is to record a rich conversation interspersed with reflections and comments from practitioners that provide a source of accumulated wisdom for those entering the principalship. As the proceedings developed over the seven month period, it became increasingly apparent that the implications of the seminar went far beyond advice to new principals. The group of seminar participants went away with an understanding that the success of the new principal is based on the concept of interdependence and group commitment. Collective wisdom, collaboration, and dedication to a common set of beliefs and values at the school level is what will make the new principal successful. This idea of developing a culture of professional educators will lessen the sometimes impossible burden that the principalship carries and at the same time reduce the isolation of both teachers and administrators.

It became clear that when the new principal is successful, the school community benefits. The ultimate result of success for the new principal is the creation of a synergistic school culture that strikes at the very heart of what schools were always meant to be, communities of learners.

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Addendum

Reflective Practice and the Principalship

In order to help new principals gain insight regarding their thoughts, feelings, beliefs and values, the following is offered as an instrument of reflection.

> "Reflective principals are in charge of their professional practice. They do not passively accept solutions and apply them mechanically. They do not assume that the norm is a one-best-way to practice, and they are suspicious of easy answers to complex questions. They are painfully aware of how context and situations vary, how teachers and students differ in many ways, and how complex school goals and objectives actually are; they recognize that, despite difficulties, tailored treatments to problems must be the norm. At the same time, reflective professional practice requires that principals have a healthy respect for, and be well informed about and use, the best available theory and research and accumulated practical wisdom."
>
> (Sergiovanni, 1987)

The seminar group felt that because of the many challenges, aspirations, hopes and expectations that school leadership affects, it is essential that potential school leaders reflect on a number of important areas. Those who lead our schools into the twenty-first century must be prepared to deal with major shifts in the nature of students, the teaching force, and basic changes in the ways schools do business. These leaders, in order to foster growth in a complex structure, must be skilled in the process of reflection.

Those contemplating the role of principal could use this instrument as a step in clarifying their thoughts and beliefs.

These questions have been developed from a variety of sources that address leadership and effective schools. They will help provide a structure for your thoughts.

1. Identify your fundamental values as an educator. What is it that drives or will drive your sense of purpose as a principal?
2. What are the characteristics of a good school that reflect your own ideals?
3. What would you see as the mission of your school?
4. How did you develop your own "vision" of a good school. Is it something you brought with you or is it something you developed in response to the situation in your school or community?
5. How would you communicate your values, your vision and your goals with the superintendent?
   your staff?
   parents?
   students?
   the community?
6. How would you conduct your faculty meetings? (For example, what kinds of items would you include on your agendas? How would the faculty participate in the meetings? What kinds of decisions would be made in faculty meetings?)

7. How would you conduct formal meetings with parents' groups? (What would be agenda items? How would they be determined? Who would chair such meetings? What decisions would be made? Who would make them?)
8. Would you meet formally or informally with student groups? Describe the purpose and the process of these meetings.
9. What would you do to identify the educational needs of students in your school? What data would you use?
10. How would you monitor progress in your school's development in the following areas:
    the appropriateness of the curriculum?
    the instructional effectiveness of teachers?
    the progress of students in meeting curriculum goals?
11. What would you want the community's image of your school to be?
12. How would you establish school goals and objectives? Who would participate in this process, and in what ways would they participate?
13. What influence would the superintendent and the school board have in establishing goals for your school?
14. Describe your own role in bringing about changes in curriculum and instruction.
15. How do you resolve conflicts over the nature or process of change when these conflicts occur within or between the faculty, the parents, the superintendent and school board.
16. How would you establish your expectations of teachers? of students?
17. How would you reward or recognize achievement?
18. Describe the general climate or atmosphere that you would want in your school. How would your teachers associate with one another?
19. What constraints might you be faced with in trying to do your job effectively? What resistance would you encounter?
20. Describe your own style and behaviors as an educational manager and leader.

Reprinted from CASDA Newsletter

Select Seminar on Needs of Beginning Principals

The Leadership in Educational Administration Development Center (LEAD) for New York State recently completed The Select Seminar on the Needs of Beginning Principals.

The group of twenty-four teachers, principals, and superintendents from rural, urban, and suburban districts began its work in October 1987. The results of the seven-month program will be published this summer. The publication will have merit not only for beginning principals, but for teachers, superintendents, school board members, the public, training institutes, and veteran principals.

Chapters of the report will include:

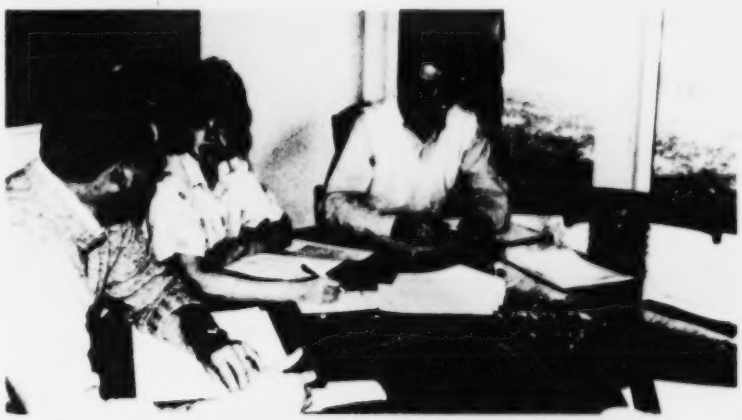
I. A Letter to New Principals
II. Observations on the Principalship
III. Recommendations to School Districts (Superintendents and Boards)
IV. Advice to New Principals from Teachers and Veteran Principals
V. The Principal for the 90s and Beyond

The writing team for the publication will consist of Glenn Nichols, high school principal at Lake George; Sean O'Neill, teacher from Guilderland's Farnsworth Middle School; and Kirsten Ruglis, an assistant principal from Linton High School. The CASDA-LEAD Center staff will assist in the editing. During the seven-month process of study, reflection, writing, discussion, and questioning, the seminar participants developed a series of generic and specific strategies that should be considered in the induction of new principals now and in the 1990s.

Other participants included Jackie Birch, teacher, Linton High School, Schenectady; Richard Broome, principal, Argyle Central School; W. Edward Ermlich, superintendent, Middleburgh Central School; Frank Gorleski, principal, Cohoes City Schools; David Grapka, principal, Altamont Elementary School, Guilderland; Martha Guilder, teacher, Argyle Central School; Mary Lafountain, teacher, Hadley-Luzerne Central Schools; George Leibowitz, teacher, Troy High School; JoAnn Levato, teacher, Lynnwood Elementary School, Guilderland; Thomas E. Marzeski, principal, Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School; Dominic A. Nuciforo, Sr., principal, Ravena Elementary School; Ward Patton, superintendent, Waterford-Halfmoon U.F.S.D.; Leonard Quint, principal, Lynnwood Elementary School, Guilderland; Betty Singer, prin-

Kay Sole calls attention to the role of the principal beyond the 1990s.

Dominick Nuciforo makes a final report.



Small group discussions consumed much of the two days at Rensselaerville.

Seminar participants in small group discussions.

Completes Deliberations

cipal, Lansingburgh Central School; Kathleen Sole, teacher, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central; Dr. Jayne M. Steubing, principal, W. H. Barkley Elementary School, Amsterdam; Debbie Wisner, teacher, Tesago Elementary School, Shenendehowa.

The following are excerpts taken from participant comments:

I LEARNED THAT:

- Principals are human beings. I learned that a group of people who apparently have no ideas in common when they first meet can talk and listen and come up with better ideas than they started with.

- I can still learn from others; I can converse with fellow educators about educational matters without having to "defend" every word or having my views as a superintendent looked at under a microscope for ulterior motives.

- This workshop and its results would have been extremely beneficial for one prior to becoming a principal. I also learned that administrators and teachers can work together in a variety of settings, including this one.

- The current structure that prepares principals needs to be refined to meet the changes occurring in education today. In addition, a mentor program should be developed to assist beginning principals.

- Many of us from different facets of education have similar beliefs regarding the principalship.

- We can be a force of change!

- Group process procedures are (can be) VERY productive. The Select Seminar approach is one I plan to encourage in my school district for the collaborative efforts at improving the educational program.

I WAS PLEASED WITH:

- The recognition that principals need a mentor system.

- The willingness of the individuals involved to remain on task and work together toward the successful completion of the seminar's purpose.

- The fact that we were able to pull our thoughts together and come up with a semi-finished product. I am anxious to see the final draft of the seminar paper. I do hope our efforts will assist a new principal, for it is an unbelievable position.

OTHER COMMENTS:

- This was a very positive experience for me. I left each meeting more interested in education and more impressed with the quality of the people in education.

- As a beginning principal, this kind of dialogue has been helpful. It has made me think, rethink, and clarify some of my positions. It has given me ideas and food for thought.

- Overall **super** "10" experience. Thank you! ■

Seminar participants at dinner at Rensselaerville.

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